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SUBJECT: A/S BURNS IN YEMEN: MEPI AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS  
SHOWING RESULTS

1. (u) Summary: During his October 3-4 visit to Yemen, Assistant Secretary Burns experienced first-hand how development programs complement and support Post's counter-terrorism goals. Meetings with President Saleh and FM Qirbi reported in septels. A/S Burns received comprehensive briefings from the Embassy development team (USAID, Pol/Econ, Public Diplomacy, Agriculture) in preparation for on-site visits. At the Supreme Committee for Elections and Referenda, the Chairman and MEPI-funded implementors NDI and IFES discussed the close cooperation that resulted in a forty percent increase in women's voter registration, excellent election day administration and the most peaceful election ever despite some acknowledged flaws. Burns visited a local NGO train-the-trainers workshop for the MEPI-funded project to eradicate women's illiteracy. He also saw the Sailah municipal drainage project in central Sanaa that provides improved flood control and sanitation. American Institute for Yemen Studies (AIYS) briefed the A/S on the plans for the new MEPI-funded building that will increase cultural and academic exchanges and understanding between Yemen and the U.S. End Summary.

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Embassy Sanaa Development Team -- Practical Focus on  
the Most Troubled Governorates  
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2. (u) Embassy Sanaa's Development Team briefed A/S Burns on Post's efforts to effectively tap all available funding (AID, MEPI, monetized food aid) and expertise to create complementary and effective USG programs. USAID highlighted the team's strategy for both short-term high-impact projects and long-term development in four main sectors -- health, education, private sector development (primarily through agriculture) and democracy and governance. Health programs in Marib were highlighted to illustrate the team's emphasis on fostering development primarily in five remote and tribal governorates where services and government control are lacking, an important complement to Post's counter-terrorism goals.

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MEPI/Elections 2003:  
Excellent Cooperation between SCER, NDI, IFES  
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3. (u) The Supreme Committee for Elections and Referenda (SCER) hosted A/S Burns, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) for a discussion on the April 2003 parliamentary elections and MEPI-funded assistance. SCER Chairman Khalid Ash Sharif welcomed A/S Burns and thanked him for the assistance provided through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) to NDI and IFES, which he praised as instrumental to the success of the election. Ash Sharif detailed the technical preparations for voter registration and election day, showing materials such as IFES-assisted voter registration books that helped increase women's registration by 40% -- making women 42% of the electorate. He noted vital NDI's role; agreeing with NDI Director Robin Madrid that the cooperation helped the SCER act as a bridge between government and the opposition parties to alleviate suspicion and dampen the potential for violence.

4. (u) A/S Burns said it was important for the United States to support Yemen's goals in economic development and democratic reform through partnership. He noted that "Yemen was out ahead of other societies in the region on many democratic reforms" but that there were "more challenges on the road ahead." Burns said the U.S. was proud to have found practical ways to encourage democratic reform through NDI and IFES and pledged to seek more resources through MEPI and other avenues to continue providing support. Ash Sharif welcomed continued cooperation, noting that the current and future programs outlined by NDI and IFES Director Enrique Saltos during the meeting would be very important to Yemen's continued democratic development.

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Eradicating Illiteracy

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15. (u) A/S Burns visited SOUL's (Women and Children's Development Association) two U.S.-sponsored workshops. As part of the \$2 million MEPI-funded eradication of women's illiteracy project implemented by CARE, SOUL hosted a train-the-trainers workshop for CARE workers to conduct baseline surveys and assessments. CARE contracted SOUL to conduct evaluation and training for the project, which is designed to provide basic education to women who have been left behind by the educational system. A/S Burns was also briefed on SOUL's training of local NGO capacity, which was funded through Democracy Small Grants.

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Sailah Project  
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16. (u) During transits between meetings, A/S Burns was shown the Sailah municipal drainage and flood control project, funded primarily via more than \$15 million dollars of USG monetized food aid assistance over the last several years. The Sailah project is a channel through central Sana'a that has been instrumental in controlling flooding and the flow of water during the rainy season. It has drastically improved the health and sanitation situation in the city.

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American Institute for Yemen Studies  
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17. (u) A/S Burns met with American Institute for Yemen Studies (AIYS) Director Chris Edens to discuss support for on-going research and fellowships, renovations of cultural sites, and efforts to increase U.S.-Yemen understanding through the exchange of research and ideas. The A/S and Edens discussed AIYS's ability, as a non-governmental entity separate from the U.S. Embassy, to engage in non-traditional diplomacy efforts. AIYS has been forced to move to six different locations over the past 25 years. It currently has \$500,000 in MEPI funding to purchase a building and compound for its offices and hostel facilities. Both the A/S and Edens agreed that having a permanent location would provide the security and infrastructure for AIYS to expand its capacity to promote interests beyond economic development and culture.

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Burns Meets Embassy Staff  
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18. (u) A/S Burns spoke to all Embassy staff about U.S.-Yemen cooperation on security and development, Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian situation. The Ambassador hosted an in-house barbecue that provided an excellent opportunity for the Embassy's junior officers to meet A/S Burns.

19. (u) This cable was cleared by NEA A/S Burns.  
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